

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

## COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

## COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

The Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

## COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing.

## COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

## SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed briefing.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—  
H.R. 1868

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 1868, an act to prevent across-the-board direct spending cuts, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Democrats have just passed a \$1.9 trillion spending package. They filled the bill with lots of partisan priorities. They refused to work with Members on this side of the aisle. Almost all of what we are doing here—have done there is going on a credit card. That is going to have to be paid for by our children and their children.

Democrats also ignored the Medicare sequester as part of that \$1.9 trillion bill. As a doctor, I have cared for patients in Wyoming for more than two decades. I cannot ignore this decision.

There are more cuts to healthcare providers serving seniors. That is what these have done. They go into effect starting April 1. They are coming.

Congress must help those working on the frontlines fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be our highest priority. Ignoring cuts to Medicare while spending \$1.9 trillion on other things, to me, is irresponsible.

Instead, just a few days after their partisan spending bill was signed into law, here we have the chairman of the Budget Committee back asking for additional money.

Now, he knows the right thing to do is to help these Medicare providers on the frontlines, and I want to do exactly the same thing. Once again, instead of working on a bipartisan basis, Senate Democrats are rushing through another partisan spending package.

There is a better way. Senator COTTON and I have introduced the Protecting Seniors Access to Healthcare Act. Our legislation takes a small amount of the money from State and local governments as part of that \$1.9 trillion bill. Instead of billions going to Gavin Newsom and instead of billions going to Andrew Cuomo, our legislation gives a small fraction of that money to help our healthcare providers around the country. Instead of a blank check, our bill gets the money to where it is needed the most: to healthcare providers on the frontlines of this pandemic.

Our bill also includes commonsense provisions to ensure that taxpayer money is not given to illegal immigrants or prisoners. Our bill simply says that if you are here illegally, you don't get the payments in the Democratic spending bill.

Senator COTTON and I know we can't hand out American taxpayer dollars to illegal immigrants. That is why our border is being flooded right now—because President Biden offers benefits for illegal immigrants. We also shouldn't be cutting checks to people sitting in jail.

The question is whether Washington Democrats are interested in solving problems or just playing politics. I think we can provide much needed relief for Medicare providers, and we should. It is completely irresponsible for the Democrats and the administration to spend \$1.9 trillion and fail to help the healthcare providers who are working to serve Medicare patients.

Therefore, Mr. President, I ask that the Senator modify his request to instead take up H.R. 1868 with my substitute amendment at the desk and ask unanimous consent that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Vermont so modify his request?

Mr. SANDERS. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Is there an objection to the original request by the Senator from Vermont?

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I understand we are not in a quorum call.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Correct.

## DEFENSE BUDGET

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I am down here today to talk about something that I have talked about many times before, and that is the need to have a strong defense budget so we can deter our adversaries.

You know, it is not like it used to be in the old days. It is for real. These guys—China, for example, is in a position they have never been in before. I think it is important that we talk about this budget that is coming up again. It is more important now than ever.

Over the past few weeks, the Senate Armed Services Committee has been having hearings in which we have heard from top military leaders, defense experts, and Pentagon officials. What we have heard has been grim.

LTC H.R. McMaster told us that since the 1990s, China has undertaken the "largest peacetime military buildup in history."

Admiral Davidson, who leads the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said, "I think our conventional deterrent is actually eroding in the region."

Last week, Admiral Faller, who leads the U.S. Southern Command, said, "Now more than ever, I feel a sense of urgency about global threats we face in our neighborhood."

Now, I agree. I thought the Cold War was bad, but the threats we are facing now, especially from China, are more complex and more dangerous than they ever have been before. In fact, I look back sometimes wistfully at the days of the Cold War when things were predictable. We had two superpowers. We knew what they had; they knew what we had. Mutual assured destruction meant something. It really doesn't anymore. Times have changed. I agree that the Cold War was bad, but it is worse today.

I am glad to hear President Biden and members of his administration say that China is our top pacing threat. Both Secretary Austin and Deputy Secretary Hicks told the Armed Services Committee during their nomination hearings that was the situation.

What concerns me is, I haven't seen the Biden administration take any action that backs up these words. Instead, we are hearing rumors that the Biden administration is considering a flat defense budget, which is actually a 2-percent cut when you adjust for inflation. At the same time, China is increasing theirs by 6.8 percent.

It kind of reminds me of the last 5 years of the Obama-Biden administration. That would have been from 2010 to 2015. During that 5-year period, the budget for the military was reduced by 25 percent. At the same time that it